

Sermon for the 25th Sunday after Pentecost
Trinity Church, November 2, 2008
Matthew 28:1-12

Sometimes it looks like Jesus is taking sides, and whole theologies have been constructed on that notion. Could that possibly be the one who said, “Love your enemies”? He criticized the Scribes and the Pharisees in no uncertain terms; but he did not put them outside the reach of God’s. Jesus sympathized with the poor and vulnerable people in the human community, but he did not condemn the rich simply for being rich.

A few weeks ago, June and I watched an old Peter Sellers movie we got from Netflix. Sellers played the part of a rather scruffy Anglican priest, a simple-minded man who didn’t have the manners or accent of Oxford or Cambridge. By an administrative accident of the Archdeacon, he was sent to be vicar of the most upscale and wealthy church in an industrial city. You can already see what’s coming.

Here was this splendid church in a city sharply divided between the wealthy on one side of town, and the workers on the other side. Many of those folk were living in desperate poverty and squalor. This simple, untidy priest in a large

homeless family to share the spacious and beautifully-furnished vicarage. And when the archdeacon came round to visit, the scene was glorious chaos.

The next thing he did was to start a food-distribution system, financed by an old dowager who just happened to own a major share in the town’s principal industry. With that, the whole economic order of the community began to change in uncomfortable ways. The bishop finally got involved and when he tried to counsel his priest, he began by saying, “I understand your concern for the poor, but must it go this far?” And the simple, misplaced and untidy priest said, “My lord, you don’t understand. I’m not worried about the poor. I’m worried about the rich!”

This is the theme that runs through all of these lessons from Matthew.